



Preparing Engaged Citizens: Integrating Civic Learning in General Education

Tracy H. Slagter, Ph.D.

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Interim Director, University Studies Program Associate Professor, Political Science





General Education at UW Oshkosh | Our Transformation

OLD: No reform since the 1970s
Lots of artifacts from other eras
Over 700 classes to choose from
Little coherence
Essential Learning Outcomes... what?

NEW: Complete overhaul
Courses connected and intentional
New guidelines for course inclusion
New governance structures
Tied to Essential Learning Outcomes



USP Guiding Principles

- Incorporation of High-Impact Practices (HIPs)
- Inclusive excellence
- Making the case for liberal arts education
- Reflection as a tool for learning
- Assessment evidence via ePortfolio
- Relationships as the basis for success
- No increase in time to degree



Form Follows Function: Building the USP

Explore: Breadth and Opportunity

General education requirements in lab science, math, humanities, social sciences, and fine/performing arts

Quest I: First-Year Experience

Small, paired classes, Peer Mentors, introduction to college life and expectations, help finding resources

Quest II: Problem-Solving

Paired classes, ethical dilemmas via case studies

Quest III: Community Experience

Significant engagement with Community Partners and Alumni Mentors

Connect: Synthesis

Advanced composition, USP's "capstone"





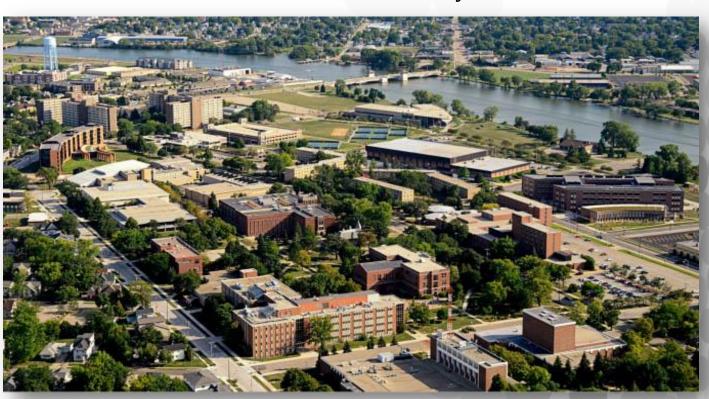
Our Campus: Bringing the Community IN

UW Oshkosh: 13,000 students, mostly undergraduate

First-Year Students: approximately 1,600 each year, many first-generation

UW System: third largest in system of 26 campuses (4- and 2-year)

The Wisconsin Idea: the borders of the university are the borders of the state







Our Community: Extending the University OUT

Oshkosh, Wisconsin: population ~66,000

Wisconsin's "Event City": EAA Airventure, Rock USA, Country USA, Lifest, etc.

Major Employers: Oshkosh Truck, EAA, UW Oshkosh

Demographics: 91% white, 3% African American, 3% Asian





Quest III: Difficult, But Worth It

Required for every sophomore student (1st or 2^{nd} semester)

Inspiration: Musil's <u>Civic Engagement Learning Outcomes</u>

Portland State University's Senior Capstone courses

Features: Liberal Education: *why* are we doing this?

Students as contributors, not passive receivers

Community Partners

Alumni Mentors

Community Experiences, not "volunteer hours"

The four "Rs" (Quest III Checklist; *handout*)

Student conduct and handbook

Staff member dedicated to these courses *only*

Civic Engagement Student Interns (x2)

Study abroad options for Quest III





ABOVE: Art 236: Experience Mapping (Oshkosh Senior Center)

RIGHT: Anthropology 225: Celebrating Culture Through the Arts (Oshkosh Area School District; Lighted Schoolhouse)







Interdisciplinary Studies 224: Conflict & Memorial (UW Oshkosh Veterans Center)



Business 275: Marketing & Sustainability (Growing Oshkosh)





Quest III: Why It's Worth It

For the Community

Building community relationships Responding to employer demands (hands-on experience, problem-solving, etc.) University woven into the community fabric

For the Students

Hands-on experience directly related to coursework
Networking with community members
Resume-building
Unique experience they might never otherwise have (farming example)

For Instructors

Off-campus and out in the community Extending expertise to new (local) areas Develop new courses



Challenges & Opportunities

Community Partners

Finding new (and/or consistent) Community Partners
Ensuring quality Community Experience projects for students

Students in Quest III

Student understanding of value of Quest III Ensuring connections between projects and coursework Scheduling difficulties (for classes *and* time for projects)

Quest III Instructors

Administrative tasks associated with Quest III Assessment of out-of-classroom experiences Finding a role for Alumni Mentors



Find Us!

www.uwosh.edu/usp
(New site goes live in a few weeks!)

Email: usp@uwosh.edu

Facebook: USPatUWO

Main Office line: (920) 424-1257



Pollock House, home of the USP